

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 HA-05 DODE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02
SS-15 NSC-05 SMS-02 /077 W
-----013645 100515Z /12

R 091447Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8947
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USNATO
AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

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USEEC
USOECD

E. O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: ELAB, UK, SHUM
SUBJECT: ENGINEERS' EXECUTIVE ENDS EXCHANGES WITH USSR

SUMMARY: AT ITS WEEKLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD AUGUST 8,
THE ENGINEERING SECTION OF THE AMALGAMATED UNION OF
ENGINEERING WORKERS (AUEW) ACCEPTED A MOTION CALLING
FOR AN END TO EXCHANGE OF DELEGATIONS WITH THE USSR.
THE MOTION WAS A RESPONSE TO THE RECENT DISSIDENTS'
TRIALS AND THE DENIAL OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USSR. IT IS
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A FURTHER DEMONSTRATION OF THE SHIFT TOWARDS MORE
PUBLIC CRITICISM OF EASTERN EUROPEAN REGIMES SHOWN
IN SECTIONS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN RECENT MONTHS.
THE MOTION ALSO REFLECTS THE ANTI-COMMUNIST FLAVOR OF
THE NEW AUEW ENGINEERING SECTION EXECUTIVE. END
SUMMARY
1. THE FOLLOWING MOTION, PROPOSED BY GAVIN LAIRD, WAS

ACCEPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE ENGINEERING
SECTION OF THE AUEW AT ITS MEETING OF AUGUST 8:

"THIS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL RECORDS ITS REVULSION AT THE
TRIALS AND SENTENCES OF THE SOVIET HUMAN RIGHTS CAM-
PAIGNERS.

"THESE CITIZENS HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO LENGTHY PERIODS IN
PRISON FOR SIMPLY TRYING TO ESTABLISH THOSE THINGS
THAT WESTERN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES CONSIDER NORMAL
DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE.

"IN THE LIGHT OF THIS CONDUCT, AND THE CONTINUING
REPRESSION OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN THE USSR, THE AUEW
(ENGINEERING SECTION) AS A MARK OF OUR PROTEST AT
THIS CONDUCT BY THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES, HAVE
DECIDED THAT NO MORE DELEGATIONS WILL BE EXCHANGED
BETWEEN THE AUEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND THE USSR."

2. THE MOTION WAS PASSED BY FIVE VOTES TO TWO WITH THE
OUTGOING PRESIDENT, HUGH SCANLON, ABSTAINING. SCANLON
LATER SAID THAT HE WAS NOT CONVINCED THAT THE REMOVAL
OF CONTACT WITH THE WEST WAS THE BEST WAY TO HELP
SOVIET DISSIDENTS. DESPITE SCANLON'S ABSTENTION AND
THE OPPOSITION OF TWO OTHER EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
(INCLUDING MAOIST REG BIRCH), THE RESOLUTION MEANS
THAT THE AUEW (ENGINEERING SECTION) IS THE FIRST
MAJOR UNION TO BAN RECIPROCAL VISITS WITH THE USSR,
A COMMON ELEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY OF
MANY BRITISH UNIONS.

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3. THE BAN IS IN LINE WITH THE POWER SHIFT IN THE
NEW EXECUTIVE, WHICH WILL COME UNDER THE PRESIDENCY
OF THE STAUNCH ANTI-COMMUNIST TERRY DUFFY AFTER
SCANLON'S RETIREMENT IN OCTOBER. THE RESOLUTION ALSO
COMES AS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT TRADE UNION ATTITUDES
TO INTERNATIONAL ISSUES ARE BEGINNING TO SHIFT. THE
VOTE OF THE AUEW, WHICH HAS RECEIVED WIDE MEDIA
COVERAGE, FOLLOWS SURPRISE AT THE TONE OF INTERNATIONAL
MOTIONS CONTAINED IN THE PRELIMINARY AGENDA FOR THE
TUC.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ENGINEERING, MEETINGS, AMALGAMATED UNIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LONDON12695
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780327-0150
Format: TEL
From: LONDON USEEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780883/aaaacrko.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 96e66d66-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1793747
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ENGINEERS' EXECUTIVE ENDS EXCHANGES WITH USSR SUMMARY: AT ITS WEEKLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD AUGUST 8, THE ENGINEERING SECTION OF THE AMALGAMATED UNI ON O
TAGS: ELAB, SHUM, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/96e66d66-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014